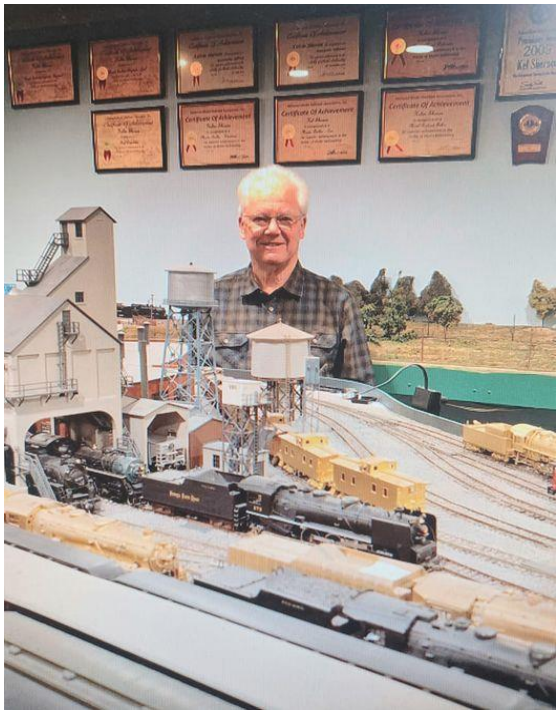
MMR_0764 Ken Sherson



I'm a retired professional engineer and live in Wellington, New Zealand, with my wife Ruth. We have three Children and five Grandchildren. All the Grandchildren like running Grandad's trains.

Like many Railroaders, I was five years old when my Dad built our first layout. Fast forward to my early teen years and I built my own 10' x 5' layout; then came Surfing, Surf lifesaving, Cars and Girlfriends. After we got married model railroading was put aside until a work transfer took Ruth and I to Melbourne, Australia.

I joined the Melbourne MRC and my interest in US prototype was accelerated. Following our return to New Zealand, I had to decide whether to model a Western railroad, like many of my friends here, or an Eastern railroad. I was always going to model the steam era, just to be different from the diesel era modellers around me.

Returning home from a business trip to the USA, I was in San Francisco (the same weekend as the first Star Wars film premiered) wandering around hobby shops when I came across John Rehor's book, The Nickel Plate Story. Endgame for me. Steam, Berkshires, High Speed Service, great safety record, customer focused; I've modelled the NKP since.
I'm a firm believer in the 'It's your railroad' philosophy so do what pleases you. My HO layout at home is 'proto-style'; obviously NKP themed, but not precisely prototypical.

I'm on my fourth iteration of the NKP - Whitby Division. The third lasted 20 years, iteration 4 uses that layout but extended in a longer room, that layout is now 23 years old. The layout era is 1949; Berkshires, Mikados and Consolidations rule. There are some Alco PAs on passenger assignments.

I also have an O Scale modular layout which is used for public shows and summer operating sessions when we can put that layout up in the garage. I'm a founder member of an operating group, the American Central Model Railroaders, who have been meeting for over 40 years. We meet every second Friday night to operate our layouts on a round-robin basis. This group has provided life-long friendships, a lot of fun and continuous inspiration to keep improving my layout.

My getting to MMR took a while. I was influenced and encouraged by my fellow ACMR modellers, the wider fraternity of US prototype modellers in New Zealand and other NMRA Members.

These include NMRA Australasian Region members John Saxon MMR FNMRA HLM (Dec), Gerry Hopkins MMR FNMRA, Sowerby Smith MMR FNMRA and David O'Hearn MMR.

Just as influential on me were members of the Nickel Plate Road Historical and Technical Society, Tony Koester and David Vaughn amongst many others. Over time, visits from other NMRA Members to my layout, such as Ralph and Nathan Oxhandler, and Gerry Leone, provided further encouragement. I'd also like to acknowledge the work the JMRI folk do to enhance our hobby and support users.

Participation in the hobby and associated interest in the prototype has provided Ruth and I with the incentive to attend conventions, and visit layouts and railroad related locations we otherwise would never have considered. We are grateful for the welcome and friendship extended on those visits.

I've always been happy to promote the hobby in general and the NMRA specifically. So, no surprises that my first Certificates were Association Volunteer (in 2007) and Association Official (in 2013). Someone forgot to tell me that Divisional Superintendents are only meant to hold that role for two years. Some twenty-two years after appointment, I recently got to hand the role over.

Full momentum on my AP Certificate journey got underway in 2020. Building my layout provided Civil and Electrical. Operating the layout provided Chief Dispatcher. Providing articles for and editing our ACMR e-Mag, Highball, got me Author. This was followed by Cars, as I needed a set of O Scale NKP Cabooses.

Finally, to complete the requirement across the four categories to attain MMR, I completed the Structures Certificate. I'll continue to promote the hobby, encourage others to obtain their Achievement Program goals and get on with completing the multitude of projects I have to finish on my layout. That's the neat thing about our hobby, there's always something to do, even if it's just relaxing and running a train.

Cetificates earned:

Master Builder – Cars Master Builder – Structures Model Railroad Engineer – Civil Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical Chief Dispatcher Association Official Association Volunteer Model Railroad Author